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Adm. Turner Says Russia May Gain Control of Sea

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 8 — The man nominated to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency says the United States is "running to keep up" with the Soviet Union for control of the World's seas.

Adm. Stansfield Turner warns also that "the balance is slowly tipping against us" in the race with the Russians for submarine power.

In an article on the naval strength of the United States and Soviet Union in the current issue of Foreign Affairs magazine, Turner warns that simple numerical comparisons of the ships operated by the two super powers are inadequate and misleading. He says that in judging the fighting capabilities of the two navies, "accurate comparisons can be made only with regard to sea control."

Warning that increasingly powerful missiles "have outstripped our ability to defend against them," he concludes:

"We are running to keep up, and depending heavily on technology and innovation rather than more ships and aircraft to keep the balance from shifting against us."

Nonetheless, he finds, "the U.S. Navy can still successfully assert sea control," although it must use more of its forces in areas where the Russians can concentrate their power.

President Jimmy Carter announced yesterday that he had chosen Turner to direct the Central Intelligence Agency. The two men were classmates at the Naval Academy but were not well acquainted, the White House said.

Turner, 53 years old, who is now commander in chief of allied forces in southern Europe, is one of the Navy's new breed of officer who combines an impressive academic background with military skill. He was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford University in England where he obtained a master's degree, and has also done advanced work at Harvard

University business school.

Those who know Turner say he is "enormously energetic with a very inquiring intellect." One friend said:

"He's a questioner. At the Naval War College (where he was president from 1972 to 1974), he used to say, 'The only bad question is the one that's not asked.'"

Several Capitol Hill sources said the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which will act on the nomination before the full Senate votes on confirmation, would probably "take its time," partly because Turner's views are little known among Senators. However, there was no initial indication that the nomination would face the serious opposition that led to the withdrawal of Mr. Carter's original selection, Theodore C. Sorensen.

Turner has no public record that would offer clues as to how strongly he feels about the need for closer control of CIA covert operations and the prevention of a repetition of past abuses and illegalities by the agency.

However, Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr. (Dem.), Delaware, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said, "Carter has made that commitment to me and I feel sure that Turner would fulfill it." Biden said, "I'm going to want to take a look" at Turner's opinions and qualifications, but that he saw "no problem" about confirmation.

Another committee member, Senator Adlai E. Stevenson (Dem.), Illinois, said he was "unaware of any problems" that could block confirmation.

Turner met yesterday with Senate minority leader Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, who told reporters afterward that "my impression of Adm. Turner is very favorable."

Baker, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he told Turner "We will examine the nomination very carefully." The Senator said he also told Turner that he had "no predisposition to oppose him."